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## FEAR TARIFF AGITATION.

### Manufacturers Recall Experiences When the Wilson Bill Was Being Agitated.

The average textile manufacturer of Philadelphia has ample cause to view with apprehension any continuance of prolonged tariff agitation, with possibilities of radical revision of the various schedules. Those who went through the bitter experiences of the period from 1893 to 1897, when the Wilson bill was being agitated and was actually in operation, can recall all too vividly the hardships of that time. Naturally their memories are such as would make them view with deep anxiety any possibility of a repetition of such experiences says a writer in the *Textile Manufacturers' Journal*.

The textile manufacturer who is able to speak from his own personal experience of the effects of that law upon business and the mill operatives affords a most telling witness when one of the leading industries of this country with its vast

amount of invested capital is on trial, as it were. Those whose personal experiences of Wilson bill times were obtained in Philadelphia are able to speak eloquently on this subject. As a prominent unit in the textile industry Philadelphia shared fully in the effects of political tariff tinkering and the hardships suffered by its operatives and manufacturers were most severe.

Before considering Philadelphia's experiences in detail the general conditions obtaining in the textile trade at that time may possibly be reviewed to advantage. In the statement made by Theodore Justice of Justice, Bateman & Co., Philadelphia, before the Ways and Means Committee, January 6, 1897, the following is pertinent: "The census of 1890 showed that the people working in woolen mills earned annually about \$40,000,000. The mills in 1896 were running less than half time, and therefore there was less than \$40,000,000 actually earned. Manufacturers will testify that the consumption of wool in 1896 was less than half the consumption of raw

wool in a normal McKinley year. Therefore, there was a decrease of over \$40,000,000 in the wages of mill operatives, and a decrease of \$45,250,000 as state before, in the value of the wool to the grower. That makes \$85,250,000 that was lost by two classes of labor, viz., the wool grower and the woolen-factory laborer. It has been stated that wages earned by laboring men circulate ten times during a year and that money earned by farmers from proceeds of farm products circulate five times during the year.

"I am willing to assume that wages earned by mill hands circulate no more during the year than those of the farmers, and therefore we will multiply by five this \$85,250,000 loss in purchasing power by two classes of people alone to show what has been the loss in the purchasing power of the American nation from the reduction in the wool schedule alone. It reaches the enormous sum of \$426,250,000. This is partly the cause of the depression existing everywhere to-day. If you distribute this \$426,250,000 among 70,000,000 people it amounts to a decrease of purchasing power of about \$6 per capita." In another place: "Under the McKinley law a woolen mill hand had steady employment and earned \$10 a week, and could buy an all wool suit containing no shoddy for \$10, with the proceeds of one week's labor. Owing to the closing of the mills (the result of the Wilson law), which did not average half time in 1896, notwithstanding the advantage of free wool, he earned only \$5 a week. The fixed charges for fuel and provisions for his table and rent, which go on nights and Sundays, absorbed all the \$5 which he has earned, and he has had no money left with which to buy clothing, not even shoddy clothing. And men who made \$10 all wool suits out of 55 cents secured wool, under protection, could not sell them even with 30 cents secured wool."

The Bulletin of the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, September, 1896, contains the following statement: "Free wool has had full swing for two years, and it is not to be denied that it has cut a wide swath in the industrial realignment of the United States—wider and deeper than Mr. Wilson dreamed would be possible. The advent of his political party to power in 1892 had found the wool manufacturers in a condition of prosperity under the McKinley tariff of 1890 such as had never but once befallen it—during the civil war, when high prices and exceptional demands made large profits and quick fortunes. All the machinery in the country was busy and new mills were building everywhere. The increasing competition precluded large profits, but the demand was steady, sales were easy and the manufacturers found no fault. The people certainly had no occasion to do so, for they were getting their woolens cheaper than ever before, in greater variety and of steadily improving quality. These two years, in which they have had unrestrained and unfettered access to the wools of the world, have been the most disastrous in the history of the American wool manufacturer, not excepting the collapse that followed the close of the war of 1812, or the panic of 1837, or the panic of 1857. . . . The output of American mills was reduced in a larger percentage in 1896 than the imports were increased; to such a degree, in fact, that it is safe to say that nearly one-half of all the wools which entered into consumption in that year were of foreign manufacture. We have in this country enough woolen

machinery to manufacture all the woolen goods our people can consume. But we have no use for it under the present tariff. The statistics are not the only evidence, nor are they the most eloquent. For every woolen loom stopped in America a loom was started up abroad.

"Wages in woolen mills are determined largely by the scales that prevail in other industries; they cannot be reduced when general reductions are not progressing. Manufacturers are averse to a contest over wages. In the present instance they preferred the other alternative, for there was no certainty that even with lower wages they could hold their own. Toward the end of the year 1895, therefore, production began to decrease, and before the heavy winter season was over nearly one-half the machinery employed upon men's wear was idle. Many mills shut down entirely, others ran alternate days, or half or two-thirds time; still others discharged the half or more of their employees and, with the advance of this summer, about 80 per cent. of the wool machinery of the country stood idle.

"It is not necessary to dwell at length upon the experience of the woolen mill operative under the tariff of 1894. His condition is always photographed in that of the manufacturer; if the latter prospers, employees prosper; if he can get no orders for his looms, his weavers are idle. Under the McKinley tariff wages in woolen mills reached the highest point, measured by their purchasing capacity, in the history of the country. More important was the regularity with which they were earned and paid.

With the general condition of woolen mills and their operatives during this period in mind, it is easy to comprehend the disastrous results of the period upon the many textile mills located in Philadelphia, which had made it one of the greatest manufacturing centres of the world. With these mills idle it must needs follow that the large army of men and women depending upon this industry as their sole means of employment were placed in desperate conditions of want and privation.

As early as 1893, when the tariff clouds began to hover over the horizon, the city's industries began to reflect the uncertainty of the future. Manufacturers found their orders falling off to such an extent that they were either compelled to run on part time or to close entirely. This state of affairs soon had its effect upon the mill operatives in Ken-

sington, Frankford and the other textile mill sections of Philadelphia.

With their revenue cut off, as well as the means of obtaining it, thousands of operatives and their dependents were reduced to actual want. The condition of these members of the community soon forced itself upon the attention of their fellow citizens.

The North Eastern Soup Society and Relief Association was located in the textile district at 1840 North Front street. In fact all the societies which were of a permanent nature established to care for the worthy poor during the winter commenced operations before their usual time, which is around January 1. This house was open 135 days, until March 10, 1894. In that time 916 families, representing 1,796 adults, 2,632 children or 4,428 in all, received 101,140 pints of soup and 101,822 pounds of bread. In 1895, from January 9 to March 30, they distributed 39,038 pints of soup and 29,277 pounds of bread to 201 families, representing 1,243 persons. In 1896 and 1897 296 families were enrolled as receiving aid. After the passage of the McKinley bill and the recurrence of activity in the mills the demands for aid decreased. In 1898, ten years subsequently, 187 families; 1904, 132 families; and 1905, 80 families; and 1906, 94 families were assisted in this way.

The activities of the Kensington Soup Society also showed an increase. Operations commenced earlier than usual. In three weeks in January, 1893, 172 families of 800 members received aid, 11,250 pints of soup were distributed and 4,610 loaves of bread. Opening on November 28, 1893, in ten days they dispensed 4,939 pints of soup and 1,594 loaves of bread to 130 families of 780 members, and from January 4 to 18, 1894, they assisted 358 families of 1,799 members distributing 17,720 pints of soup, 6,333 loaves of bread. The records of this society show that their activities were greatly increased by reason of the unusual demands made upon it. In 1893 they assisted in all 230 families of 1,246 members, while in 1895 they assisted 881 families of 1,712 adults and 2,477 children. This proportion was fairly well maintained during this period. Opening on January 1, 1895, by the 22d of the month only 129 families, with 690 members, required assistance. This increase in activities was reflected by practically every soup society located in the mill districts.

Many of the manufacturers who passed through this unhappy period are no longer living, but those who are still actively identified with the textile industry are

loath to recall those dark days of worry and financial loss. They naturally dread anything approximating the recurrence of those conditions as they realize it must needs strike a disastrous blow to a leading industry in this country.

It is a peculiar fact that there seems to be little or no definite record of the mills failing or closing down during those years. But a casual glance through the daily papers of that day shows a few of the numerous specific cases. Among those noted as closed for various lengths of time in Philadelphia, or failing, were: H. Whitaker & Son, carpet yarns; Dalton & Son, woolen yarns; C. H. Masland & Son, carpets; Philip Doer & Son, carpets; Blood Bros., hosiery; John Blood & Bro., underwear; Mt. Vernon Co., worsted yarns; Job Batty, yarns; Seville Schofield & Sons, Doelmore Manufacturing Company, and many others, large and small.

Even with the partial resumption of work, difficulties were continually confronted. The question of wages made strikes of frequent occurrence, as various reductions were made. These conditions, dominated by an uncertainty hanging like the sword of Damocles over the heads of the luckless textile manufacturers, made the period one long nightmare.

## Improving Sheep Standards.

Many millions have been spent in recent years by sheep men in improving the standard of American sheep. Americans have overcome their early prejudice against mutton eating and it has become necessary to have a combination breed that will serve equally well for wool production and for the market. The old time scrawny and looking Mexican sheep that was a great rustler on the range and that sheared a fair amount of wool, but which was too "stringy" for table purposes, has almost disappeared. Sheep men have imported millions of dollars worth of the finest breeds from Europe in order to improve their stock. One great sheep outfit in Oregon makes a practice of bringing in a shipment of the finest French-bredded locks from France every year. The result has been a marked change in the character of the American sheep, but the change has cost the sheep man a great deal of money.

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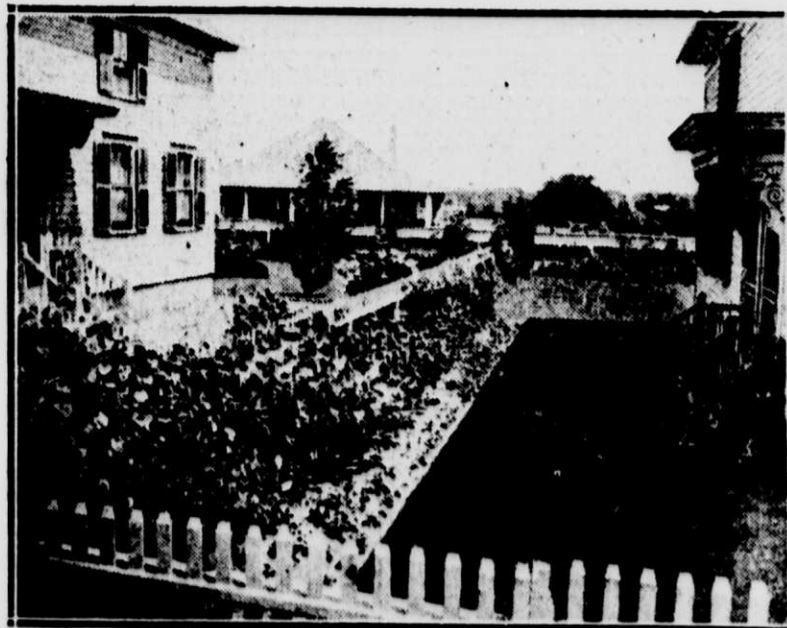
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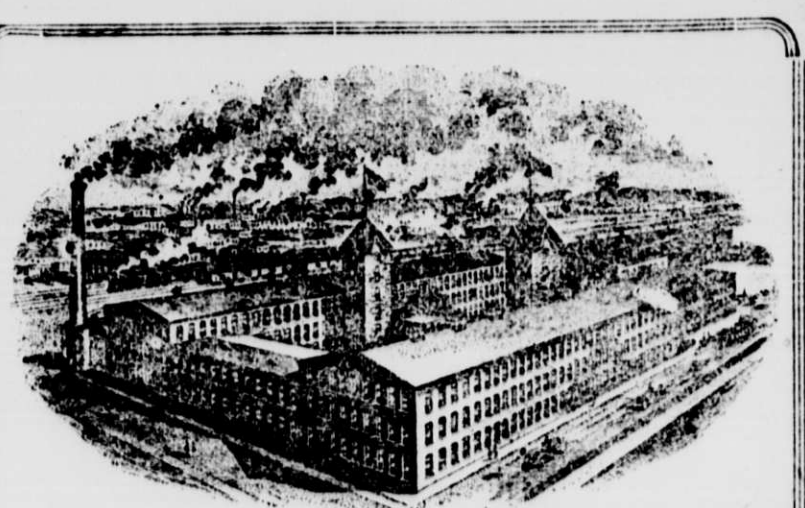
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